



The Corps Engages: White House Engineers

COL Thomas L. Casey's appointment began the 57-year tradition of an Army engineer occupying the position of White House administrator.

IN early 1877 President Ulysses S. Grant appointed COL Thomas L. Casey the commissioner of public buildings for the District of Columbia, which also made Casey administrator of the White House. Thus began the 57-year tradition of an Army engineer occupying that position. That officer also served as the Army's military aide to the president. This custom lasted until 1934 when, as part of a larger reorganization, President Franklin D. Roosevelt transferred that position to the National Park Service. Prior to Casey's appointment, the

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Army officer selected could come from any branch of the Army.

COL Spencer Cosby, who served as White House administrator and commissioner from March 1909 to October 1913, oversaw design and construction of new executive offices at the White House. One new office for President William H. Taft's use became known as the Oval Office.

Appropriately, the last engineer officer to serve as the White House administrator was COL Ulysses S. Grant III, grandson of the president who first appointed an Army engineer. □



COL Spencer Cosby (center) commissioner of public buildings and grounds for the District of Columbia, and President Woodrow Wilson (right) prepare to leave the White House for the inaugural parade in 1913.